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WHY HOME RULE IS UNDESIRABLE.

BY W. E. H. LECKY, AUTHOR OF A “ HISTORY OF ENGLAND IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.”

SINCE the memorable occasion when Mr. Gladstone, having just gone to the country at a general election without the smallest intimation that he had changed his opinions or intentions on the question of Irish home rule, and having actually appealed to the electors to send in such a Liberal majority as would make him independent of the Parnellites, announced his conversion to the party whose votes had become essential to his majority, and attempted to place the government of Ireland in their hands, there has been no transformation scene in English politics comparable in its dramatic interest to that which has taken place since the verdict in the divorce case in which Mr. Parnell was the respondent.

The former event, as is well known, led to the most serious disruption of the Liberal party that has taken place since 1793. A minority of that party, comprising—if Mr. Gladstone himself be put aside—by far the greater part of the weighty leaders, both of its moderate and of its advanced section, broke away from the main body. Among these “dissident Liberals” were the Duke of Argyll, Mr. Bright, Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Cowper, Lord Derby, Mr. Goschen, Lord Hartington, Sir Henry James, Lord Northbrook, and Lord Selborne, and it is no exaggeration to say that they carried with them the overwhelming majority of the more educated portion of the party in England, as well as nearly every Protestant Liberal in Ireland. All these strenuously maintained that in the existing condition of Ireland home rule would be merely another word for investing the National League with legislative powers; that it would inevitably place the government of Ireland in the hands of men who could not be trusted to discharge the most elementary functions of honest government; that it must reduce Ireland to a condition of utter anarchy, and that it would probably strike a fatal blow to the security of the empire.

The attempt to carry a home-rule bill, tearing the whole constitution of the empire in pieces, through a newly-elected Parliament, without the smallest authority from the constituencies, was defeated, and the question was speedily submitted to the country at an election. Mr. Gladstone had the advantage of carrying with him the organizations of the Liberal party, which was naturally the strongest party in the kingdom. He himself enjoyed a far greater personal ascendancy than any other living English statesman. He was supported by the solid Irish Catholic vote in all the great English towns; and the eighty-six Parnellite members, who had hitherto been bitterly opposed to him, and who had invariably shown themselves either ostentatiously indifferent or ostentatiously hostile to the general interests of the empire, were now the most obsequious of his followers. But in spite of these advantages he was utterly defeated.

In the Parliament which had been elected at the close of 1885, and which met in January, 1886, there had been 333 Liberals, 251 Conservatives, and 86 Parnellites. In the Parliament which was elected in July, 1886, the Gladstonian Liberals had sunk to 205. The Parnellites remained 86, while the Conservatives were 303 and the Liberal Unionists 75. The combined forces of the Gladstonians and the Parnellites were confronted by a clear working majority which exceeded 110, and an alliance was established between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists which has proved one of the most successful and has certainly been one of the most disinterested in English history. Mr. Goschen, it is true, at the desire or with the full consent of his colleagues, afterward consented, in a time of great difficulty, to place his rare financial abilities at the service of the government, and became Chancellor of the Exchequer, but the other members of the party decided to remain entirely without office; sinking their special differences with the Conservatives in the great and transcendent end of maintaining the unity of the empire, but at the same time giving a marked and steady liberal bias to the policy of the Conservative ministry.

Nearly five years have passed since the election, and no efforts have been spared by the defeated party to recover their position. Never, indeed, did an English party show such alacrity in burning what they had adored and adoring what they had burned; and there was a melancholy amusement in watching

how every characteristic step of their policy was best condemned by their own earlier words. The men who were now their closest allies, the men into whose hands they desired to place the protection of property, the maintenance of law, and the government of an integral portion of the empire, were the very men whom Mr. Gladstone had denounced and imprisoned as “preaching in Ireland the doctrine of public plunder”; pursuing a policy of “sheer rapine”; aiming at the “ruin of all who decline to obey the doctrine of the Land League”; “marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the empire.” Boycotting, which Mr. Gladstone had shortly before denounced as “combined intimidation exercised for the purpose of inflicting ruin and driving men to do what they do not want to do,” and with murder for its ultimate sanction, was now described as mere “exclusive dealing”—something like the conduct of a Tory lady who confines her custom to tradesmen of her own party. A Crimes Act which was exclusively directed against crime or against conduct clearly provocative of crime, which was called for by the most urgent necessity, and has been justified by the most beneficial results, and which in its leading provisions is considerably less stringent than Mr. Gladstone’s own Crimes Act of 1882, was represented as a monstrous invasion of the liberties of the subject; while language was used about the Irish judges and the Irish constabulary which plain men who judged words by their obvious drift and tendency could only ascribe to a deliberate intention to discredit the administration of justice in order to render the task of governing Ireland as difficult as possible.

Obstruction was not formally supported by the Gladstonian leaders, but they were accustomed to leave the House of Commons while their allies, supported by Mr. Labouchère and other prominent Radicals, pursued it with such persistence that, without being able to inflict a single defeat on the government, they succeeded in impeding all important legislation during the session which took place in the first half of 1890. At the same time all the arts of the demagogue were sedulously and unscrupulously employed to sow division in the United Kingdom. “The masses” were skilfully opposed to “the classes,” and were made the objects of the most fulsome flattery. Old, smouldering jealousies between Wales and England and between Scotland and England were industriously fanned. The abolition of the Welsh Estab-

lished Church and the abolition of the Scotch Established Church were held up as prizes to the Welsh and Scotch Non-conformists if they would send in a sufficient number of home-rule members into Parliament. Every fad and crotchet was encouraged by vague, deceptive, and mischievous language, which at once raised wild hopes, stimulated agitation, and yet left the speaker substantially unpledged.

At the same time a veil of studied vagueness was thrown over the intended scheme of home rule. The bill of 1886 had been literally riddled by hostile criticism, but it was now supposed to be withdrawn, and therefore a large portion of detailed criticism fell to the ground. One amazing portion of Mr. Gladstone's scheme had been that the Irish should be absolutely unrepresented in the Imperial Parliament and totally without a voice in imperial concerns, but that they should at the same time be bound to pay a tribute which was calculated at rather more than three millions of pounds to the imperial government. Was it conceivable, it was asked, that a parliament of Ireland, even if it had been composed of men who were far more disposed to observe contracts than those who were likely to be brought together in a home-rule Parliament, would permanently accept this position? Was it not certain that one of its first measures would be, with the full support of its constituents, to refuse its tribute as a badge of slavery? And would not the exclusion of Irish representation from the Imperial Parliament be a first step towards the severance of Ireland from the empire? Mr. Gladstone had defended this exclusion on the ground that the presence in the Imperial Parliament of Irish members to vote on imperial questions was impracticable, as it was beyond the wit of man to distinguish accurately affairs which were imperial from those which are not. He now, however, declared himself quite ready to solve the difficulty and to admit Irish members into the Parliament at Westminster, though to what extent and in what manner and on what conditions was carefully concealed. Two different orders of members elected on different principles and with different qualifications were intended to vote together in the same Irish chamber, but the absurdities of such a system were so clearly shown that it was speedily dropped.

A more important measure was a bill which was intended to come into operation concurrently with the home-rule bill for the

purpose of buying out Irish landlords by a large sum lent on imperial credit. Considering the attitude of the home-rule party towards landed property, such a measure was dictated by the plainest considerations of justice as well as policy ; but it was a strange comment upon the schemes of Mr. Gladstone that such a measure was required in order to prevent the proposed legislature from commencing its legislative career by a wholesale plunder of settled, established, legal property. It was not, however, a popular thing to lend a vast sum on imperial credit to a country which Mr. Gladstone's legislation was making a foreign country and was bringing, as most experienced men thought, very near to separation ; and accordingly, although Mr. Gladstone, Lord Spencer, and Mr. Morley had used strong language about some such policy being an obligation of honor towards the landed gentry of Ireland, it speedily dropped out of the Gladstonian programme, and its authors used all their powers to discredit the purchase measures of their successors. What Mr. Gladstone's real intentions on this matter were is difficult to say. He took care to inform the constituencies that he no longer considered himself bound by his Purchase Bill. If we may trust the recent revelations by Mr. Parnell of the conversations at Hawarden, Mr. Gladstone's final decision was, in the event of his obtaining a majority, to introduce a bill somewhat similar to that of 1886, but at the same time to put no pressure on his followers to carry it. In this way his conscience might be satisfied, without the smallest danger of the measure becoming law. It was a design which was truly characteristic of its author.

It was constantly urged by the Unionist members that Mr. Gladstone, when calling on the constituencies to return a home-rule majority, was at least bound to give some clear statement of the manner in which he intended to deal with these great questions. Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues, however, refused to comply, and there can be no doubt that their reticence greatly assisted them. It was impossible to argue against the details of an unknown scheme ; it was difficult to prove the impracticability of a policy which was but half-disclosed ; and under the shadow of a convenient obscurity many divergent opinions could be combined. The partisans of simple robbery who would place the land of the country without restriction in the hands of the authors of the "no-rent manifesto" and of the "plan of campaign" were en-

couraged by knowing that the Land-Purchase Act was abandoned, and that Mr. Gladstone was doing everything in his power to obstruct the policy of purchase which was adopted by his successors, while many moderate men succeeded in persuading themselves that some limited scheme could be struck out which would prevent home rule from being a mere plan of plunder and a civil war. Lord Rosebery had a political future before him, and was certainly not a fanatic. Lord Spencer had pledged himself very strongly to deal honestly with Irish landlords, and his character carried with it some, though greatly diminished, weight. Mr. Morley had used language of the same kind, and, however violent might be his opinions, there was at least a well-founded confidence in his sincerity and honor.

All these circumstances operated in favor of the Gladstonian party, and the question whether and how far they were gaining ground is a very difficult one. One prediction which was very confidently made in 1886 has been signally falsified. It was said that Liberal Unionism as a separate body would prove impossible; that the ties and attractions of old party connection, the disadvantages attaching to a comparatively isolated position in Parliament and in the constituencies, and the notorious difficulty of maintaining a close alliance between two originally discordant parties, one of them with and the other without office, would together bring about a speedy dissolution or disintegration of the Unionist alliance. This prediction, at least, has hitherto proved wholly erroneous. No alliance in English history has worked with a more perfect, a more uniform, a more unembarrassed harmony; and although the Liberal Unionists in Parliament have had their deserters, they have not been more than four or five.

With the educated classes also it may, I think, be safely affirmed that home rule has made no progress. No one who knows England will doubt that the overwhelming majority of educated Englishmen are fully convinced of its extreme danger, and of the extreme immorality of the means by which it has been advocated; and if the old middle-class constituencies had been unaltered, it would have been impossible. The true danger comes from other quarters. Vast masses of uninstructed electors had been brought into the constituencies by a recent reform bill. They, for the most part, knew little and cared little about the Irish question; they were told that every question in which they were interested

must be adjourned till home rule was carried, and the most powerful means had been taken to seduce them. Discouragement at past failures, simple weariness of the question, and the vain hope that it would be at an end if home rule were granted, might induce many to vote for unqualified concession, and among the most ignorant voters, who care little or nothing for political questions and parties, there is always a tendency to change votes so as to give each party its turn. In ordinary times such a tendency is scarcely an evil, but it becomes a great danger when one party has pledged itself to measures for the dismemberment of the empire.

It is undoubtedly true that the bye-elections since the last general election have, on the whole, gone against the government. The full strength of the case may be stated in a single sentence. The net result of the bye-elections has been a gain to the opposition of fifteen seats, counting thirty on a division; and this, with the addition of the small defection from the Liberal Unionists in Parliament, has reduced the government majority in the House of Commons to about eighty.

Prophecy has borne a very large part in the recent speeches of leaders of the Gladstonian party, and it has been their system to welcome every triumph at a bye-election in ecstatic strains, as if it were a national reversal of the verdict of 1886. Much, however, may be said to qualify this view. It is one of the most universal and best-recognized facts in English politics that it is the tendency of bye-elections to go against a government; and this was especially to be expected after such a gigantic and wholly abnormal displacement of political power as occurred in the election of 1886. Every government must offend large classes, commit mistakes, encounter difficulties, incur unpopularities; and at bye-elections personal, minor, and transient questions tell much more powerfully than in the enthusiasm of a general election. The loss of fifteen seats in four years and a half in a Parliament of 670 members was in no degree extraordinary; and even if the opposition were wholly homogeneous, a majority of eighty would still leave the government extremely powerful. Very few English governments since the Reform Bill of 1832 have been so unshaken after four and a half years of combat. Of the bye-elections several were demonstrably won by causes that were entirely unconnected with home rule; several were won by very small majorities, which would

probably be destroyed at a general election ; and the two strongest elements of attraction on the side of the opposition are essentially transitory. One is the amazing personal ascendancy exercised over great classes of electors by a man of eighty-one. The other is the inestimable advantage of having no defined plan of home rule to defend. As soon as the opposition were compelled to bring forward a definite measure, differences were certain to arise, and the enormous difficulties of the question would be felt.

For what are the inherent difficulties of the problem to be encountered ? In the first place, as I have lately reminded the readers of this REVIEW, it is desired to establish home rule in Ireland in opposition to the passionate resistance of a third of the population, that third comprising an overwhelming preponderance of the elements which in every healthy country would be the guiding influences of the nation. Almost the whole body of the Protestants, whether they be *Episcopalians* or *Presbyterians* or *Methodists* ; nearly all the leaders and organizers of industry ; the whole body of the Catholic landed gentry ; the immense majority of men of all creeds who have risen to prominence in any lay profession ; the bankers ; the large shopkeepers and merchants ; the directors of railways ; the men who have created and chiefly worked the great linen manufacture, which is the principal manufacturing industry of Ireland ; Belfast, which alone among Irish towns has risen to be a worthy competitor of the great centres of English industry ; the counties in Ulster which in wealth, industry, and loyalty rank incomparably the foremost in Ireland,—all these great interests or sections of Irish life look on the rule of any parliament that could now be set up in Dublin as absolute ruin, as the greatest calamity that could befall them. On this side, too, are the vast and growing organization and the fierce, yet disciplined, passion of the Ulster *Orangemen*, who have pledged themselves to resist home rule to the very last, and who, if it were ever established, might once more play a most formidable part in Irish history.

A remarkable letter written by a fellow of Trinity College,* and published shortly after Mr. Gladstone announced his conversion to home rule, clearly shows the effect which that conversion at once had upon Irish credit. There was an immediate fall of all the more important securities. In three months the fall in

* The Rev. John Stubbs, D. D., March 15, 1886.

ten of what had always been deemed the most important and secure investment funds in Ireland amounted to no less than £4,111,500, or nearly 19½ per cent. If home rule were carried, it is perfectly certain that its first result would be a fatal shock to Irish credit and a great emigration of capital and industry; and it is no less certain that it must be accompanied or speedily followed by stringent coercive legislation for the subjection of Ulster. There would be the gravest danger of an armed resistance by the Orangemen, and at least of a general strike against taxation in the north, and British troops would soon be required to place the most loyal, industrious, and hitherto law-abiding population of Ireland under the rule of rebels and outside the protection of the Imperial Parliament.

And to whom would the guardianship of Irish government then pass? There can be no greater folly in politics than to set up a governing machine without considering into whose hands it would fall and in what spirit it would work; and there is no greater crime that a public man can commit than to place the government of a nation in the hands of dishonest and disloyal men. A long, patient, and most impartial judicial inquiry, conducted by some of the ablest judges in England, and supported by overwhelming evidence, has established beyond all reasonable doubt the character, aims, and methods of the men by whom the home-rule movement has been organized and directed, and who in a home-rule parliament would inevitably be the virtual rulers of Ireland. It has shown that at least eight of the most conspicuous leaders entered upon the movement for the express purpose of producing the complete severance of Ireland from the British Empire; and that the whole movement has been in the closest connection with a conspiracy which was not only animated by avowed and inveterate hatred of the British Empire, but was also directly responsible for those hideous dynamite outrages upon unoffending citizens which form one of the blackest pages in the history of the nineteenth century. "A true revolutionary movement in Ireland," Mr. Parnell once said, "should, in my opinion, partake both of a constitutional and an illegal character. It should be both an open and a secret organization, using the constitution for its own purposes, but also taking advantage of its secret combination." "While our objects lie far beyond what may be obtained by agitation," said a confiden-

tial circular of the Clan-na-Gael conspiracy, "a national parliament is an object which we are bound to obtain by any means offered. The achievement of a national parliament gives us a footing upon Irish soil ; it gives us the agencies and instrumentalities of a government *de facto* at the very commencement of the Irish struggle. It places the government of the land in the hands of our friends and brothers. It removes the Castle's rings and gives us what we may well express as the plant of an armed revolution. From this stand-point the restoration of Parliament is part of our programme."*

This calculation is a perfectly just one. To any one who has any real knowledge of Irish history few things can be at once more grotesque and more audacious than the appeals which are sometimes made to the merits of the old Protestant and intensely loyal Parliament of the eighteenth century, which consisted mainly of the more important landlords of the country, as an argument for such a parliament as could now be set up. Is it conceivable that the integrity of the empire could subsist if all the vast powers which must necessarily reside in an Irish parliament were under the direction of old Fenian conspirators and of men who had been paid by the paymasters of murderers ? If such a state of things could endure in times of peace and prosperity, could it last through the agonies of some great and perhaps disastrous European war, when the very existence of the empire was menaced, when all its resources were strained to the utmost ? Is it not absolutely certain that differences must frequently arise between the two legislatures, and in what spirit would they be treated ? For years it has been a main object of the present leaders of the home-rule party to stimulate among great sections of the Irish people a constant, unreasoning hatred of England and the English government, to teach them to regard every incident in foreign politics with favor exactly in proportion as it was likely to prove injurious to the interests of the empire. Can any reasonable man suppose that this spirit would at once cease ? Even if the original agitators underwent some semi-miraculous process of political conversion, would not others inevitably arise to displace them by playing on the same popular passions ? Any restrictions that were imposed on the local parliament would at once form a pretext for conflict ; and what would be likely to happen if the

* Report of the special commission, 1888, pp. 18, 116, 117.

parliament supported by the people pronounced those restrictions to be null and void, and if there were no means of enforcing them except a civil war?

This is, however, by no means the full force of the case. It is one of the characteristic features of the present conspiracy that the leaders, having found it impossible to arouse the mass of the Irish farmers in a purely Fenian or national struggle, resolved to convert the movement into an agrarian struggle by making it one for the ruin and expulsion of the landlords of Ireland. The true and main motive of this movement was not agrarian, but political. It was desired to enlist in the movement a powerful class who had shown themselves half-hearted, and it was desired to ruin or expel another class who were the most powerful supporters of the Union and the connection. In the report of the special commission the evidence substantiating this charge has been arrayed with a fulness that leaves nothing to desire, and the history of this policy may be clearly traced to the writings of Lalor and Mitchel. It was favored by a period of keen agricultural depression, and it was supported by large American subscriptions.

One part of this campaign consisted in a skilfully-organized and widespread conspiracy to defraud creditors and repudiate contracts. Tenants were instructed to settle for themselves what rent they would pay, and, if that sum was refused, to lodge it with trustees who were to employ it in resisting the creditor. They were at the same time taught that rent was mere robbery; that the prairie value of land at the utmost was all to which its owner was entitled; that rents would be reduced again and again with each successive triumph of the home-rule party; that the total abolition of the landlords of the country was the object to be aimed at, and that when it was attained the independence of Ireland would be won. The Pope has recently authoritatively condemned the "plan of campaign" as plainly immoral, and it is difficult to see how the most fervent Protestant can fail to agree with him.

Mr. Gladstone once declared that a body of men "have arisen in Ireland who are not ashamed to preach in Ireland the doctrines of public plunder"; and he added: "If you go forth upon a mission to demoralize a people by teaching them to make the property of their neighbors the object of their covetous desire, it does not require superhuman gifts to find a certain number of follow-

ers and adherents for a doctrine such as that." It was, however, clearly seen by the leaders of the movement that these measures would fail unless they were supported by a system of organized intimidation to prevent honest men from paying their debts and farmers from taking the vacant farms, and to bring ruin and every form of wretchedness on all persons who refused to obey the orders of the Land League. This system has been judicially pronounced by the special commissioners to be a "criminal conspiracy," and they have described it, in language which is certainly not beyond the truth, as an "elaborate and all-pervading tyranny." It has produced many murders, and countless outrages which are only a degree less horrible than murder. It pursues the poor man with a cold and calculated cruelty in every business of life, deprives him of the very necessities of existence, follows him with the finger of scorn even into the house of God, drives the child out of the school, withholds medicines from the dying and sometimes coffins from the dead, mutilates hideously the harmless cattle that are browsing on an evicted farm, greets with jeers and ferocious merriment the widow and the orphans of the murdered man.

If the reader suspects that there is the smallest strain of exaggeration in this picture, he should examine the vast mass of sworn evidence which has been brought before the special commission, and he will then be able to understand the true character of a tyranny as barbarous and as elaborate as any that has been witnessed in modern days. If he will next turn to the sworn reports of the speeches of the leaders of the League, he will have little difficulty in concluding that all this mass of cruelty, tyranny, and fraud is the direct and inevitable consequence of their language and of their counsels. He will then, perhaps, understand the feeling with which respectable Irishmen look on those English politicians who have taken such men as their allies, and upon those American politicians who are accustomed to honor such men as "patriots."

I shall not pursue this subject further, nor can I attempt here to discuss fully the agrarian condition of Ireland and its bearing on the present agitation. The subject is one of great importance, but it would require an article to itself; and I have already, I fear, trespassed too much on the hospitality of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. I would only ask the American reader whether any serious and honest government could place the

whole landed property of a country at the disposal of men holding these principles and pursuing this policy. I may here be permitted to repeat a few lines which I wrote on this subject in the beginning of 1886.

"Irrespective of the enormous sums of English money that have been invested either in the proprietorship of Irish soil or in mortgages upon it, the obligation of honor as well as of interest which rests upon the English government is of the most overwhelming kind. There is, in the first place, the general duty of every government to protect property which has grown up under its rule. There is, in the next place, the notorious fact that a chief cause of the unpopularity of Irish landlords is their attachment to the English connection, and that the agrarian agitation is well known to have been begun by the Fenian or Separatist party, chiefly because without holding out some prospect of direct pecuniary advantage they could not enlist the farmers fully in their cause. There is, in the third place, the fact that about £52,000,000 has, in the lifetime of a single generation, been invested under the Encumbered-Estates Act in the purchase of Irish land, at the invitation of the government, and that all that land is held under a distinct Parliamentary title. There is, in the fourth place, the fact that Parliament has just established a new court for the express purpose of regulating the conditions of Irish property, and has exacted large sacrifices from the Irish landlords for what was supposed to be the general benefit of the country. If obligations of honor so strong, so clear, and so accumulated are neglected, no property held under the guarantee of the English government can be permanently secure."

A few words may here be inserted about the present position of Irish tenants—a subject which has, I believe, been scandalously misrepresented in America. The past agrarian history of Ireland undoubtedly contains many dark and shameful pages, though it can be easily proved that in the memory of living men the hardships which have been endured by Irish tenants have, in the enormous majority of cases, not been due to the oppression of any class or individuals in Ireland, but to the irresistible pressure of economical causes—to a great famine falling upon an immensely excessive population, and to the conversion of arable land into pasture, which, under the conditions of Irish soil and climate, was absolutely inevitable as soon as England opened her ports to foreign corn and American corn came into the market.

There were, however, undoubtedly defects in the law, especially in the matter of the protection of improvements made by tenants, and it is the great merit of the Land Act of 1870 that it very fully met this want. Since then, however, much additional legislation—some of it, in my opinion,

of very doubtful justice and expediency—has been carried in favor of the Irish agricultural tenant, and it is not too much to say that it has placed him in a position unique in the civilized globe. Although he may have contracted to hold his tenancy by the year or for a fixed number of years, he is now entitled to remain forever on his farm so long as he pays his rent and fulfills certain easy statutory obligations. His rent is fixed, not by contract or by market value, but by an independent judicial body. He has a right before and after eviction to sell the good-will of his farm, for which he frequently obtains a larger sum than could be obtained for the freehold. He is entitled to full compensation for all permanent improvements; and a system of purchase has been carried, and is about to be largely extended, under which the government lends him the whole sum that is required to buy his farm, on such terms that, by paying for forty-nine years an annual sum which is considerably less than his actual judicial rent, he will become the owner of his tenancy. In this manner every tenant can, with the consent of his landlord, convert a judicial rent of £50 a year into a terminable payment to the government of £35 or £40.

These are only the leading provisions of a legislation to which I believe no adequate parallel can be found in the statute-books of any other country. It is perfectly true that the owner in Ireland, as in all other countries, can ultimately take possession of his property if the legal conditions under which it is held are persistently violated; but even this last right of eviction is restricted and guarded in Ireland in a manner which is wholly unknown in any other portion of the empire. Not only is the defaulting tenant credited with the value of his improvements and enabled to sell the good will of his farm. It is also provided that he cannot be evicted for non-payment of rent unless he is an entire year in arrear; and even then, if his rent is less than £100 a year, he has six months more given him during which he may redeem his tenancy. As a matter of fact, in the great majority of cases evictions only take place when the judicial rents have been several years in arrear and after large offers by the landlord have been made and refused; and it will be usually found that when in these cases there has been real distress, the chief burden has not been rent, but loans which have been raised at extravagant interest from local usurers and shopkeepers.

I shall not venture to maintain that in the infinite variety of human circumstances absolutely no case of harsh eviction can even now take place in Ireland ; but it may be safely asserted that for one such case there are hundreds in London and in New York. In one respect, it is true, many of these Irish evicted tenants are deeply to be pitied, for many who are perfectly solvent have been most reluctantly compelled to give up their farms by the odious tyranny I have described. But it is not to beat down such a tyranny that subscriptions are asked for in America.

It is true, however, that in a large part of the west of Ireland great chronic poverty prevails. The soil there is chiefly rock or morass ; and the immense rainfall, which is the consequence of mountains bordering on a vast ocean, renders it impossible that it can ever be made agriculturally productive. In Scotland there is a large extent of land under the same conditions, but there the agricultural population has, for the most part, long since migrated to Canada or the United States, and the land is either turned into large sheep-walks or employed for sporting purposes, which at least bring into it much money and much profitable employment. Nothing of the kind exists or was ever contemplated in the west of Ireland, but there are tens of thousands of small cottiers holding portions of land too barren and too scant to support them in common decency through the year. They do not, however, depend solely on the land. Some are fishermen, but the furious swell of the unbroken Atlantic, the want of boats of sufficient magnitude to breast it, and the difficulty of finding a market for the fish have greatly restricted this industry. The kelp manufacture, which once largely assisted these poverty-stricken cottiers, has almost ceased, and their chief resource has long been the harvest work in England. Unhappily this, too, has failed them. Agricultural depression, the spread of pasture, and the spread of agricultural machinery in England have deprived them of a great portion of their scanty earnings.

All the best observers agree that in these parts of Ireland the question of rent is of little importance. The rents of these small cottiers are generally £4 a year or under ; they are very irregularly paid ; and even if they were wholly swept away, the situation of the population would not be materially improved. For this part of the Irish question it must be clear to every impartial

observer that the only radical cure is emigration, but to this the party of the agitators is bitterly opposed. Short of emigration, however, something may be done, and it has been one of the great merits of Mr. Balfour and the present government that they have grappled with the problem more resolutely than any of their predecessors. The light railways which are now being vigorously pushed on by the government in the poorest parts of Ireland, and the provisions for the encouragement of fisheries and agriculture which have been introduced—largely, I believe, at the suggestion of Mr. Tuke—into the Land-Purchase Bill now before Parliament, will do much to palliate, though they cannot wholly cure, the evil. The recent reception of Mr. Balfour in Donegal shows clearly that, in spite of calumny and agitation, the good work he is doing for these poor cottiers is clearly understood.

These remedial measures, however, as well as the system of land-purchase from which so much is to be expected, depend entirely upon the application to the development of Irish resources of the unrivalled credit of the empire. Of this inestimable benefit Ireland would be at once deprived by the triumph of home rule. Every man of business can estimate the probable credit of a government set up in violent opposition to the most industrious and prosperous portions of the nation, and conducted by professional agitators who have for years been making the systematic violation of contracts and the systematic defiance of law their engines of political propagandism. The pyramid of Irish credit is not likely to rise very high, if its foundations are laid in widespread fraudulent bankruptcy. It is quite true that there have been great revolutions in which appeals to cupidity and attacks upon property have borne a considerable part. In the great French Revolution these elements had a large, though never a dominant, place, but the results have not been encouraging, and M. Taine has recently shown, in an admirable volume, how it was only the long, stern despotism of Napoleon that restored the shattered credit of the nation. In the American Revolution also there was a party which advocated the repudiation of private debts as a means of political action; but in the American struggle such methods only bore a very small place, and it is to the eternal honor of John Adams that he most strenuously rebuked them.

But in the Irish home-rule movement attacks upon contract and debt, and appeals to the cupidity of large classes, have formed the very mainspring of the machine. The most constant boast, the most effective argument, of the leaders has been their success in breaking down contracts, ruining those who depended on them, reducing or abolishing rents. Is it credible that any sound economical or political edifice could be raised on such a basis? Are Irish landlords the only class with whom contracts can be made and broken? In any possible home-rule system the local parliament must be bound to England by contracts of the most vital character, relating to the defence of the empire and the contribution of Ireland to the national debt. What chance would there be in times of difficulty and danger of such contracts being observed if the administration of Ireland was in the hands of the authors of the "no-rent manifesto" and of "the plan of campaign," and if they had the spirit of Fenianism behind them? How can industry flourish, or capital increase, or prosperity spread, in a country where such a spirit is in the ascendant, and where the people are successfully taught to look upon politics chiefly as an instrument of plunder? What order, what liberty, can be expected in Ireland if the maintenance of law is intrusted to systematic law-breakers, and the security of individual freedom to the very men who invented and supported the tyranny of the Land League?

These considerations have long been urged by many who are very sensible of the profound differences between England and Ireland, and whose natural leanings are all in the direction of an extension of local government as far as such an extension is compatible with an honest and loyal administration of affairs. They believe, however, that no greater catastrophe could befall either Ireland or the empire than the triumph of the men who have been conducting this agitation; that no home-rule scheme such as Mr. Gladstone devised could possibly be a permanent settlement, and that it is difficult to exaggerate the evil which the agitation has already inflicted upon Ireland. Happily, the singular success of the present administration in restoring the ascendancy of the law has done much to revive peace, confidence, and individual freedom in Ireland; and whatever may be the economical effect of the conversion of a great portion of the tenantry of Ireland into proprietors, it can scarcely

fail to strengthen the Conservative elements of the country by greatly multiplying the number of those who are directly interested in the defence of private property. The process, however, must be a slow and difficult one, and the difficulty has been immensely aggravated by the fact that almost for the first time in English history there is an opposition in the House of Commons which can never be relied on to support the Queen's government in maintaining law and defending those who administer it, and which has completely discarded, on Irish questions, not only the old settled policy of the Liberal party, but also the principles and policy on which they had themselves acted within the present decade.

It is impossible, however, to deny that the whole aspect and prospects of home rule have been completely changed by very recent events. The undefended divorce case in last November, in which Mr. Parnell was a respondent, for the first time completely dispelled the illusions which the great body of the English Non-conformists appear to have formed about the character of that very remarkable man, who has for many years governed the home-rule movement with the most complete despotism, and upon whom its course in the immediate future seemed mainly to depend. There is probably no other country in Europe in which such an explosion of feeling as took place on this occasion could have been produced by such a cause. It was evidently perfectly genuine and spontaneous, and it sprang from the most respectable of sentiments ; but it is not perhaps surprising that it should have greatly bewildered foreign nations, and that it should have inspired some cool observers at home with melancholy reflections about the kind of influences by which modern polities can be swayed.

When Mr. Gladstone, at the age of seventy-five, and after more than fifty years of active political life, suddenly announced the complete reversal of the policy about Ireland which had hitherto been uniformly pursued by his party and by himself, the great body of the English Nonconformists blindly followed him. They were unshaken by all the revelations of the special commission. They were prepared to place the government of their loyal fellow-countrymen in the hands of a man who had been convicted of treasonable conspiracy ; of aggravated duplicity ; of a course of conduct directly productive of perhaps as large an amount of fraud, tyranny, and outrage as any movement of the

nineteenth century : it was only when he was proved guilty of a breach of the seventh commandment, which was totally unconnected with his public life, that the scales fell from their eyes, and they declared that they would abandon the home-rule cause if he remained at its head. The vehemence of the explosion was probably not anticipated by any class of politicians. When the divorce case was known to be pending, and only five days before it came to trial, Mr. Morley considered it a matter of so little political moment that he sounded Mr. Parnell about his willingness to accept the office of Chief Secretary of Ireland in a Gladstonian administration. The Irish members, on their side, disdainfully disregarded the Nonconformist protest. They unanimously re-elected Mr. Parnell their chairman ; at a great and most enthusiastic meeting in Dublin, in which Mr. Justin McCarthy and Mr. Healy took a leading part, they announced their unbroken allegiance to him, and at the time when they took these decisive steps not a murmur of dissent was heard from the Irish bishops.

But meanwhile the Nonconformist protests were pouring in, and Mr. Gladstone was not blind to their significance. On the 24th of November he wrote the famous letter which broke up the home-rule party by insisting that Mr. Parnell should resign the leadership of the Irish party. The expressions of the letter were carefully weighed. There was a warm eulogy of Mr. Parnell's past career. The writer urged his request solely on the ground of political expediency, and not at all on the ground of public morals ; and his words only implied, and were generally believed to point to, a mere temporary retirement until the inconvenient storm had passed. He had arrived, he said, "at a certain conclusion with regard to the continuance at the present moment of Mr. Parnell's leadership of the Irish party." "Notwithstanding the splendid services rendered by Mr. Parnell to the country, his continuance at the present moment in the leadership would be productive of consequences disastrous in the highest degree to the cause of Ireland." It would make Mr. Gladstone's own "retention of the leadership of the Liberal party . . . almost a nullity."

The sequel is well known. Mr. Parnell not only refused to retire, but at once appealed to that Fenian and anti-English sentiment which was supposed to be extinct. For years the Gladstonian politicians had been perpetually boasting of the "union

of hearts" they had created, and constantly appealing both in public and in private to the "strong conservative instincts" of Mr. Parnell as the sheet-anchor of their cause, the best guarantee of the safe working of home rule. Few things in modern politics have been more amusing than the bewildered dismay with which they read the manifesto to the Irish people in which Mr. Parnell held them up as "the English wolves now howling for his destruction"; denounced the "insolent" attempt of an English party to assume a right of veto upon the Irish leadership; declared that it was no moral conviction, but simply the Parliamentary coercion exercised by the Irish party, that had "forced upon the English people the necessity of granting home rule to Ireland"; and assured the people, on the strength of a confidential conversation held by him with Mr. Gladstone, that the proposals and intentions of the English statesman were totally inadequate to solve the question that was pending between England and Ireland.

Mr. Parnell did not carry with him a majority of his colleagues. The bishops, after a silence of a fortnight, tardily discovered that it was contrary to public morality that they should follow a leader who had been in the divorce court; and the pent-up hatreds and jealousies in the home-rule party, which during Mr. Parnell's long autocracy had been prudently suppressed, flamed forth without restraint. In England the Gladstonian papers vied with each other in abusing Mr. Parnell as vehemently as they had praised him during the four preceding years, as vehemently as they had denounced him before the election of 1885; and his defeat in the County of Kilkenny showed the power of his adversaries. But, notwithstanding this, Mr. Parnell carried with him nearly thirty members of his party; he carried with him the central body of the National League in Dublin; he carried with him the strong popular feeling in the chief Catholic towns in Ireland, and in spite of Patrick Ford and Patrick Egan in America, and of Mr. Davitt in Ireland, he carried with him almost the whole strength of the Fenian sentiment of the country. It became evident in the Kilkenny election that the struggle which had begun was one between the power of the Fenians and the power of the priests; and the furious passions, the ungovernable hatreds, the total disregard for individual liberty, that at once appeared in the midst of a party which was in

principle agreed, clearly showed what was likely to be the state of Ireland if all its discordant elements were unchained in the struggles of a democratic home rule. No man of common-sense who watched the scene could, at least, have the smallest doubt of the facility with which, in the event of any collision between an Irish parliament and an English government, the anti-English feeling in Ireland could be aroused. It is also worthy of notice that Mr. Parnell lost no time in making new appeals to the cupidity of the farmers, by holding out prospects of again breaking and reducing judicial rents if they would support him. This, indeed, has become the chief stock in trade of the Irish agitators.

But Mr. Parnell did more than divide the party. He also tore away the deceptive veil of vagueness which had been thrown over home rule. If, like all other men, he failed in extracting any unambiguous and straightforward statement from Mr. Gladstone, he at least succeeded in pledging both sections of the home-rule party to the minimum they would accept from the English government. It was now shown beyond dispute that the Home-Rule Bill of 1886 would have proved totally inadequate, and he obtained a pledge from all sections of the home-rule party in Ireland that they would accept no measure which did not give them the complete control of the constabulary and of the land of the country. The meaning of these two points is very clear. The first stipulation would place in the hands of an executive which would probably consist mainly of former Fenian conspirators, and of men who had been subsidized by the Clan-na-Gael society, an admirably-disciplined, semi-military force of about 13,000 men, and capable of an indefinite increase. It would give them the whole practical administration of the law, leaving it to them to decide how far and in what directions property should be protected and crime should be punished. It would also place the prospects of every man in a force whose loyalty and faithful discharge of difficult duties during the past years have been beyond all praise, at the mercy of men who had been pronounced by a recent judicial decision guilty of "a criminal conspiracy"; guilty of disseminating newspapers inciting not only to sedition, but to atrocious crime; guilty of themselves establishing "a system of intimidation and coercion" which led to crime and outrage, and "persisting in it with knowledge of its effect." The second stipulation was simply to place the whole land

of the country at the disposal of men who had made (to repeat Mr. Gladstone's well-known phrase) the "advocacy of public plunder" their main instrument of political propagandism.

It is undoubtedly true—though not many years since it would have been deemed incredible—that English politicians will now be found ready to advocate these concessions, but I do not believe that any British Parliament will be induced to make them. The pressure of obvious self-interest will, no doubt, bring about some kind of reunion of the shattered home-rule party, and by the time these lines appear in print it is very likely to be accomplished. But it is not probable that the lessons of recent events will be forgotten, and they have profoundly altered the political prospect. Great numbers of very honest men had supported home rule through sentiment; through misplaced hero-worship; through party discipline; through ignorance of the true state of Ireland, or through the common error of judging politics by abstract principles and formulæ, without taking any pains to ascertain how in particular instances they were likely to work. Such men had no wish to rob any one or to oppress any one, and they imagined that an honest and orderly government could be established on a home-rule basis which would conciliate the Irish people and settle the Irish question. The events of the last months have gone far to undeceive them, and to show them the abyss toward which they were impelling both Ireland and the empire.

To another class the lesson of the election of 1886 and of the recent explosion has perhaps not been less salutary. A real check has been given to the gambling for a disloyal Irish vote which has of late years most seriously lowered the level of political morality in England. Many acute men have come to see that in resting on that vote they have been leaning on a broken reed; that there is an independent element of honesty and patriotism in the country which, if it is once fairly roused, will baffle all their calculations; and that it is quite possible for politicians to sacrifice their honor without serving their interests. Perhaps it is not only on one side of the Atlantic that such a lesson was required.

W. E. H. LECKY.